ALTERNATIVE TO THE REQUEST FOR A DECLARATION AGAINST THE SUPPRESSION OF *NOMINA DUBIA* Z.N.(S.) 1715

(see volume 22, pages 265–266)

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The proposal that a Declaration be promulgated establishing an official policy against suppression of *nomina dubia* would, if adopted, be more detrimental than helpful to progress in taxonomy. Therefore I strongly urge that the proposal be denied.

2. It is true that any given *nomen dubium* may never become a *nomen clarum:* that if it does it may not be a threat to another, well-established name; and that it might belong to some species otherwise unnamed, whereupon its earlier suppression would require otherwise unnecessary duplication of name. However, the proposal already embodies the point that rarely do these events transpire.

3. On the contrary, it is commonplace for *nomina dubia* to act as vexatious thorns obstructing taxonomic progress. As long as they exist, they fester. Untold hours of effort that could far better be directed into more constructive channels are lost in the rarely successful attempt to convert a placeless *nomen dubium* into a *nomen clarum.* There comes a point of diminishing return where it would be a travesty to the intent and purpose of the Code for the Commission to refuse to call a halt to the otherwise endless search. Is this not the " confusion " which the Commission is dedicated to reduce? Is it not a contribution to stability to remove uncertainty?

4. Surely refusal by the London Congress then (1958) to take a stand does not imply or warrant the inference that no stand *should* be taken at a later time. The only justified inference, lacking a statement to the contrary, is that a stand would not, or could not, be taken at the time. This could mean no more than absence at that time of sufficient unanimity of opinion to justify a stand.

5. Certainly suppression of a name for purposes of the Law of Priority but not of Homonymy would still leave the name to be reckoned with in synonymies; there is in fact no possible way to strike a name from catalogs and indices, once published therein, and once entered they have to be cited at least to the extent of sourcing the elimination. Better to cite one opinion eliminating a name than any number of essays trying to pin it down!

6. If the policy of facilitation of retirement of *nomina dubia* by suppression upon request is sound, as I urge it is, then it may be construed equally sound to permit retirement of them, again upon request, by designation of neotypes. Inasmuch as each case must be considered separately, adequate opportunity exists for the requisite censorship of the propriety of the proposed procedure in any given case, by either the route of suppression or the route of erection of a neotype. The cases are not likely to be overwhelming in number, but if they become burdensome the docket can be relieved by any of several devices utilized in civil courts. Burdensome or not, the service rendered is one of the most useful contributions the Commission can make toward attainment of the goals stated in the Preamble to its own Code. The sacrifice of time and effort thus required pays limitless dividends in savings of time and effort by untold numbers of taxonomists now and in perpetuity.

7. Retirement of *nomina dubia* through transformation to *nomina clara* might be effected—if authorized by the Code—by approval of arbitrary allocation. However, the problems created exceed the problems solved because of the frequent difficulty of determining incontrovertibly the earliest " valid " " subsequent clarification " and of making clear that *this* particular allocation *must* take precedence over all others in the eyes of all workers. It is therefore here strongly recommended that the Code make explicitly clear that (A) automatic retirement (*i.e.* without individual consideration by the Commission) of *nomina dubia* can be effected only by (1) discovery of criteria that render them *nomina clara*, and by (2) erection of neotypes: and that (B) retirement by (1) suppression or (2) " subsequent clarification " must be authorized by individual consideration by the Commission.

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